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STUDIES IN FURNITURE DESIGNS.

FOURTH STUDY.—ROMAN—POMPEIAN.

THE illustration accompanying our study in Parallel designs for this month shows the Roman and Pompeian styles of furniture architecture, styles which are singularly dissimilar when one considers the close proximity of the localities which gave them name, and the fact that both forms originated with the same people.

The Roman mode of construction has been revived within a few years, and it affords a wide scope for the designer. Roman architecture, both in its relation to outward construction and its application to domestic articles, may be said to have had an eclectic origin, although it eventually overcame the diverse tastes that shaped its beginning, and by the adoption of different features from many styles, constructed a form distinctly national.

With prisoners of war brought from the most diverse portions of the earth, Carthage, Athens or India, each having a knowledge of his nation's taste, Rome built her city, improved her possessions and furnished her luxurious homes. Necessarily conforming somewhat to the wishes of their masters, the Roman manufacturers, the workmen from these scenes of Rome's victories adapted the fashions of their native homes to the requirements of their adopted one, and the result, as was expected, was a mixture of all styles, producing a conglomerate architecture that possessed much that was to be condemned, with a great deal that was rich and elegant, and, by the combination, made original. In addition to the furniture made by local manufacturers, the spoil of plundered cities served to adorn the drawing-room of successful generals and the boudoir of Roman empresses. Theatres were fitted with these trophies, and when the dwelling of Scarus at Tusculum was destroyed by fire, Grecian works of art, furniture, sculptures and the like, to the value of \$3,000,000, were burned with it.

Peculiar to the Romans was the *sella curulis*, a folding-stool with carved legs placed crosswise; at first it was made of ivory, afterwards of metal; it most likely dates from the times of the kings.

The simpler folding chairs for domestic use, a backless chair with four perpendicular legs, and one with a high back somewhat similar to our modern "old-fashioned" seats, were all modeled after the Greek.

The word *sella* is a general term, indicating all chairs without backs. Those with backs are called *cathedra*. The form of these latter is very much like our own draw-

ing-room chairs, with the exception that the seat was slightly broader and the back was curved, adding thus considerably to the comfort of the occupant. Soft cushions placed against the back and on the seat, indicate that the *cathedra* was intended for use in the women's apartments. As Rome became more effeminate and a luxurious mode of living was more generally indulged in, these *fauteuils* were used by the men as well.

There was also a straight-back chair, richly ornamented and decorated, known as the *solum*. This was ordinarily used by the professional man, lawyer, physician, etc., and was carved or otherwise embellished as the pleasure of the owner might dictate.

The couches and beds showed the same elegance and comfort as the chairs. The body of the bed, made either of wood inlaid with ivory and tortoise shell or of valuable metal, rested on graceful legs.

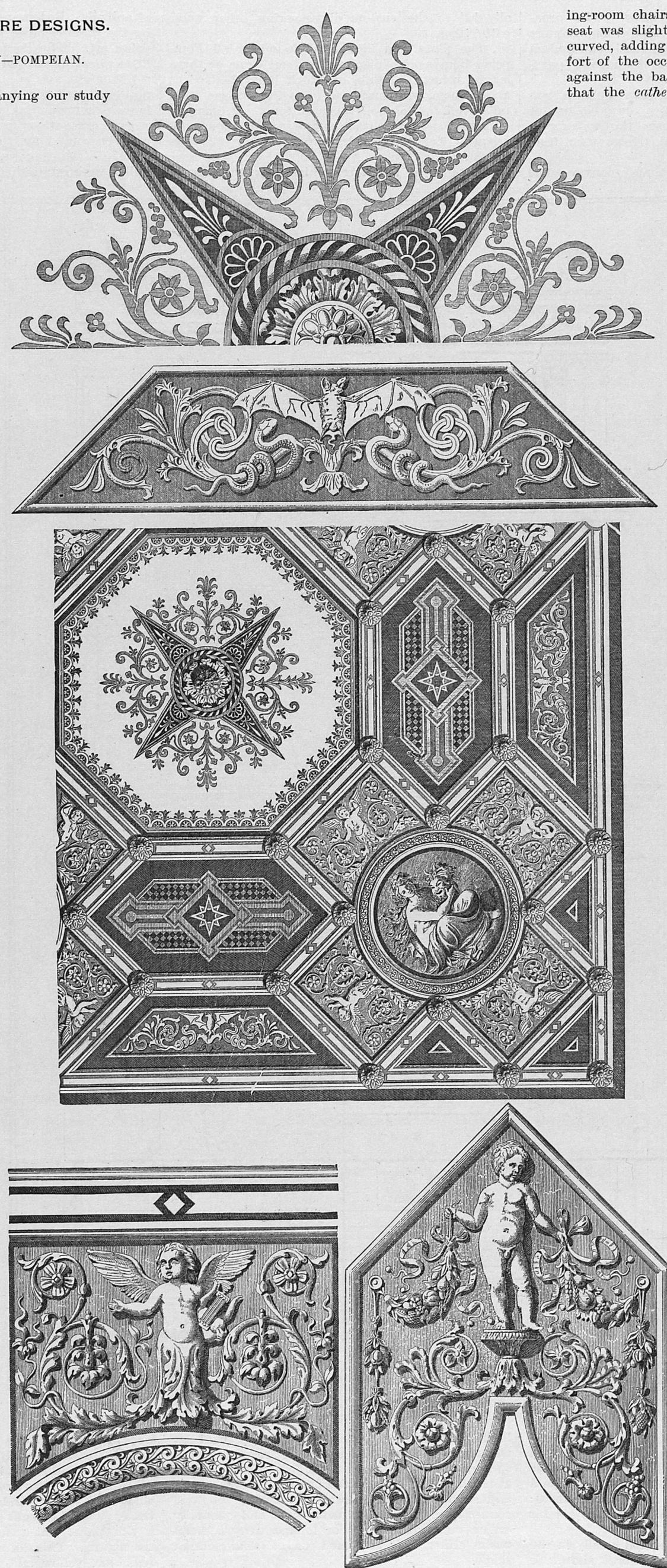
Sometimes the whole bed-frame was of bronze, and in a few cases of solid silver. The bedstead of the Emperor Elagabalus is an instance of this latter extravagant mode of construction.

A bronze bed-frame somewhat resembling the modern truckle bed, is shown on an Etruscan tomb. A bronze trellis-work instead of the usual webbing here carries the mattress. The mattress, originally filled with straw, was afterwards stuffed with sheep's wool or the down of geese and swans. Elagabalus chose the soft plumage under the wings of the partridge for his mattress. Bolsters and cushions were stuffed with the same materials, and blankets and sheets, according to the owner's wealth, were made either of simple cloth stuff or dyed and adorned with woven and embroidered patterns and borders.

Footstools, used for mounting high thrones and beds, or for resting the feet, were as general among the Romans as among the Greeks.

In the later times, when the simple custom of sitting at their meals was abandoned by the Romans, men used to recline upon couches when eating. The wife sat on the foot end of the *lectus*, or long couch, the children on separate chairs and the servants on benches. In a dining-room where guests were received, a square table stood in the centre of the triclinium, surrounded on three sides by as many low couches, while the fourth side remained open to the access of attending slaves.

About the end of the Republic the use of round tables, instead of square ones, became more frequent; the three couches standing at right angles were accordingly transformed into one, the shape of which following the curve of the table became semi-circular, resembling the form of a



A CEILING DECORATION, WITH DETAILS ENLARGED.

Greek C, whence its name *sigma*. The ornamentation of these couches, with their bolsters and valuable carpets, was rich, and harmonized with the wall decorations and the mosaic pavement of the dining-room itself.

The wall painting among the Romans was usually in black, reddish brown, deep yellow, or dark blue. In many instances the walls were decorated with paintings and frescos torn from the buildings of other cities.

The colors suggested here may convey some hint as to the appropriate ones for a modern room furnished in Roman manner.

Pompeii, the fashionable watering place resort for Roman millionaires, had adopted more thoroughly the Grecian styles and their lighter character of construction. The people had come to Pompeii for enjoyment, and it was regarded as an excuse for liberating their love for the beautiful. Tapering columns, spindle-like supports sustained the curved, hollowed and carved tops, which were often adorned with prettily arranged draperies, and everything done to please the eye while not detracting from the usefulness of the article itself.

Books and other property were kept in *scrinia*, round chests that could be fastened. Clothes and provisions had special rooms to hold them. In the later ages of the Empire, in Rome, and afterwards in Constantinople, gold and silver were plentiful for furniture; even cooking and common house vessels were occasionally made in those metals.

The centre tables for display of trifles and for ornamentation of the room, were generally in the shape of tripods, and had about the edge a raised guard to prevent the articles upon them from being jostled or thrown off.

Wooden bed frames, like all other wooden things, have been destroyed at Pompeii, but we see many couches let into the walls or niches in the bedrooms, these niches could be closed by means of curtains or pasteboard partitions.

The manner of ornamenting the tables was far more splendid among the Pompeians than amongst the Greeks. Not only were the legs beautifully worked in wood, metal or stone (the graceful forms of the numerous marble and bronze legs found at Pompeii have become models for modern wood carvers), but the slabs also consisted of metal and rare kinds of stone or wood, wrought in elegant and graceful shapes. Particularly the slabs of one-legged tables used to be made of the rarest woods; the wood of the *citrus*, a tree growing on the slopes of the Atlas, was chosen in preference to all others. The value of these slabs was immense; Cicero is said to have paid \$30,000 for one; Pollio, \$55,000; King Juba, \$66,000; and the Cethagi family, \$76,500; so Cicero got his at quite a bargain.

The value of this wood consisted chiefly in the beautiful lines of the veins and fibres, shown to still greater advantage by the polish.

The enormous value of the solid slabs natur-

ally led to the custom of veneering other wood with citrus.

The plate and nick-nacks found in all Pompeian houses were displayed on small one or three legged tables, the slabs of which had raised edges about them, presumably to keep the articles from falling off. A table of this sort found at Pompeii deserves attention on account of an ingenious contrivance between its legs to lower or raise its height.

A table of a different kind was the tripod,

of animals. Beds were rather low and characterized by the same richness that was a feature of Pompeian art. The foot and head board were but little raised above the mattress.

It might not be out of place to say there were no doors used for inside rooms in the Pompeian houses, curtains taking their place entirely. In recent excavations poles and rings presumed to have been used for this purpose have been found.

Wall painting was considered an art, and guilds were established presided over by painters of talent and cleverness.

The Pompeians inclined toward a particularly florid style, both in design and coloring, though the combinations and contrasts were so skillfully made as to relieve the eye from the brilliancy of the vivid paints. Mythological subjects, architecture and landscapes were favorite wall decorations, and frequently shown in frames admirably imitating marble. Interiors of large buildings were depicted with excellent perspective, containing multitudes of columns, staircases and human figures.

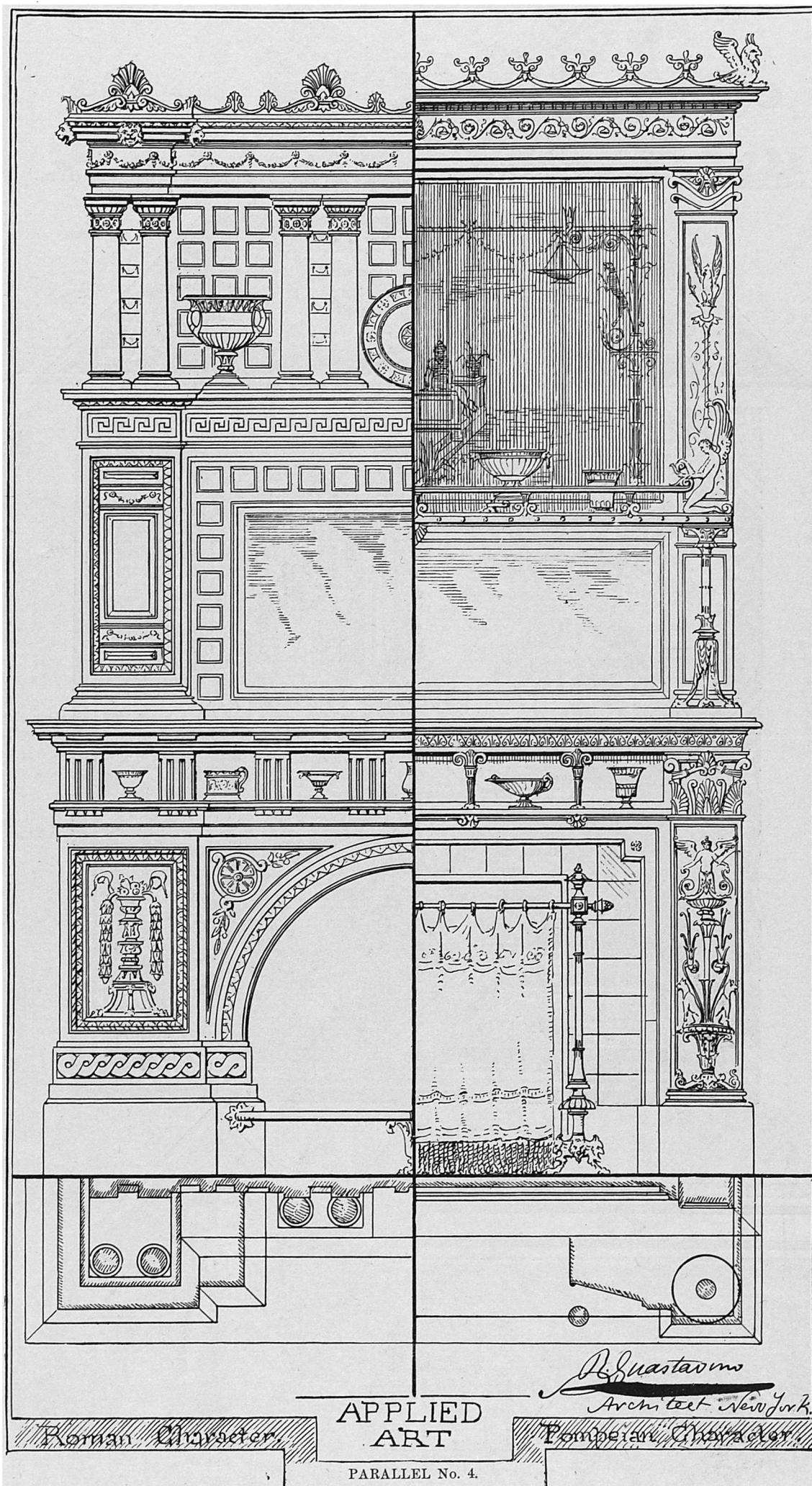
The colors used were bright red and yellow, the lighter shades of blue and green, with a judicious admixture of black, and a frequent resort to golden brown.

In modern usage embroidered upholstery would be appropriate with Pompeian frames, and in coloring the wall it might be well to follow the plan of a light frieze, darker intermediate space of wall paper, and still darker dado. Our illustration shows a mantel and fire-place of modern construction, copied after the style of both Roman and Pompeian forms.

In the side representing the Roman character the material should be marble and wood, richly carved as indicated; directly over the grate opening there are several small niches or shelves for the reception of pieces of bric-a-brac or vases; above this again is a mirror surmounted by a Greco-Roman border and flanked by a heavy pillar; at the extreme top sets of double pillars sustain an ornamental cornice, and have between each set a place for plaques and ornaments. All the material beneath the first shelf is intended to be marble, while above wood is better adapted to the purpose.

The construction of the Pompeian mantel is entirely of wood. The fancy screens before the grate opening serves to conceal it from the room, and is an excellent substitute for the so-called summer-piece.

Directly above the grate are tiles, while the outside columns are carved wood, as are also the small shelves beneath the regular mantel shelf supporting the mirror. Resting at either end of this mantel shelf is a delicate pillar, surmounted by a bronze figure, who bears in his hands one extremity of a balustrade, which extends across the lower part of a silk panel which forms the upper portion of the mantel. This silk should be of brilliant colors, red, blue, yellow and the like, and topped by a cornice, which may be coved if preferred, somewhat similar to the Roman.



imitated from the Greek, and chiefly used at meals to put vessels and dishes on; several elegant specimens of the tripod have been discovered at Pompeii. The ends of the three legs were generally shaped like the paws of animals; the legs, connected by means of metal bars and generally ornamented with figures or foliage, carry a metal basin either flat bottomed or of semi-globular shape.

Legs of chairs were imitations of the slender necks of water fowl, or the more delicate species